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MAPS AND OTHER CARTOGRAPHIC RECORDS IN THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE ARCHIVES

I. INTRODUCTION

The mapmaker's art is known to have flourished for more than five thousand years. During those millennia, the map user's technique and demands have flourished as well. This circular offers a few suggestions about the use of maps and describes summarily the maps and other principal cartographic records in the North Carolina State Archives.

Locating Place Names The most common request for maps comes from researchers hoping to locate on maps a geographical place name which they have found mentioned in wills, deeds, letters, or other eighteenth and nineteenth century records. A misapprehension usually leads the inexperienced researcher to believe that a map contemporary with the record in which he found the name is his best source for locating the geographical feature so designated. Generally, nothing could be further from the truth. This state of affairs exists for a number of reasons. Except for major geographical features that appear on almost every map of any consequence, early maps are notorious for their lack of detailed local geographical information. Frequently, seventeenth and eighteenth century maps suffer from bizarre distortions, are inaccurate by today's standards, and are difficult to interpret. Further complicating the search for such local geographical information as was shown on early maps are the facts that there are practically no detailed maps of North Carolina counties prior to the Civil War, and statewide maps do not show county boundaries prior to 1808.

The best technique for locating place names is to consult William S. Powell's *North Carolina Gazetteer* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1968) in order to determine whether the location of the geographical feature is described in this dictionary-arranged reference book. If it is, the researcher will find the feature shown on one of a series of modern maps: North Carolina soil survey maps, Army Map Service maps, or North Carolina State Highway Commission county maps.

Sometimes the *Gazetteer* will make reference to early maps on which specified geographic features may be found. When the name of a geographic feature is not found in the *Gazetteer* but the general area of its location is known (a nearby river, mountain, major creek; municipality; township; or county), the determined researcher can often find it by carefully scrutinizing a few of the maps prepared by the United States Geological Survey. However, it is sometimes impossible to find a specific local geographical feature shown and named on a map. More information about the United States Geological Survey is given below in Part II of this circular, THE MAP COLLECTION AND ITS CATEGORIES.

Locating Family Names A second unlikely anticipation of researchers is that one will be able to